

# B2–C1

upper-intermediate to advanced



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Business English Modules

# Business Impact 2.2

**DELTA**  
Publishing

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upper-intermediate to advanced

# Business Impact 2.2

Modules A, B and C

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## Business Impact

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## Welcome to Business Impact 2.2

### Module A: Praise & criticism

**Business Impact 2.2.A** is the A Module from *Business Impact 2.2*.

This module focuses on **personal encounters in the business world** and will enable you to give and accept praise and criticism with confidence in differing cultural settings.

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### Module B: Project management

**Business Impact 2.2.B** is the B Module from *Business Impact 2.2*.

This module focuses on **day-to-day business** and will enable you to manage and discuss projects with confidence and impact from beginning to end.

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### Module C: Risk analysis & management

**Business Impact 2.2.C** is the C Module from *Business Impact 2.2*.

This module focuses on **business results** and will enable you to analyse and talk about risks and risk management with confidence and impact.

Module C	Agenda	Language	Page
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# Cultural fluency & feedback

## Agenda

- › Recognising differences in communication culture
- › Managing cultural differences in responses & behaviour
- › Improving global business communication

"How many Germans does it take to change a light bulb?"

"Just one. They simply get on with the job and don't really like jokes."



## › Small talk

Start the session by chatting with a partner about the place (town, city, village or region) where you currently live or have lived in the past. Your conversation can, of course, move on to other topics that come up naturally. Use the following phrases in your conversation.

It's / It was in the back of beyond /  
in the middle of nowhere / off the beaten track.

It's definitely worth / not really worth a visit.

## Tip

A quick chat at the beginning of every English class is a great opportunity to practise and improve your small talk skills.

## › Down to business

### 1 Discuss the following questions in class.

1. What aspects of the photos suggest cultural diversity or inclusion among the meeting participants? How can this diversity contribute to the meeting's success?
2. What is your personal experience of working in a multi-national and multi-cultural environment? To what extent do cultural differences in behaviour and communication play a role?
3. What is your reaction to the cultural stereotype expressed in the cartoon? How do you think challenging stereotypes can help achieve a better understanding of other cultures?

**2a** Have you come across the terms high-context and low-context cultures before? What do you know about these terms, or what do you think they could mean?

**2b** Read the article below and find the answers to the questions.

1. How do people from low-context cultures typically give feedback?
2. What strategies do people from high-context cultures use to deliver praise or criticism?
3. How is international communication being affected by globalisation?

## LOW-CONTEXT & HIGH-CONTEXT CULTURES

High-context and low-context cultures, concepts introduced by anthropologist Edward T. Hall in *The Silent Language* (1959), explain how communication styles vary across cultures.

In low-context cultures, such as in the USA or Germany, communication is explicit, direct and task-focused. Feedback often emphasises specific actions and is clear and detailed, such as, “Your response to the client’s complaint was professional and empathetic.” Low-context communication assumes the listener does not rely on shared context or subtle cues to understand the message.

In contrast, high-context cultures, such as we find in Japan and India, rely heavily on tone, non-verbal gestures and relationships to

convey meaning. Feedback and praise are more nuanced and indirect, prioritising group harmony and interpersonal respect. For example, praise might be expressed subtly, such as saying, “That was a very thoughtful approach,” with an approving tone.

However, cultures rarely fit neatly into either category. Most exist somewhere along the spectrum, combining characteristics of both high and low-context cultural communication.

Especially in today’s globalised world, cultural interactions are complex and shaped by relative, not absolute, positions on the scale. Recognising the interplay of these styles and adapting to the context is key to effective communication.



**2c** In pairs. Think about a cultural context you are familiar with (your home country, workplace or a group you belong to). Where would you place it on the spectrum of low-context to high-context communication? Why?

**2d** Class discussion: How might people from low-context cultures misinterpret high-context feedback and vice versa? What kind of problems might occur if cultural styles are not recognised sufficiently? Can you share an example from your own experience or observations?



Enjoy watching this video clip.

A.1



**A.01 3a** You are going to hear a conversation between two colleagues. Read questions (1–4), then listen and note down the answers.

1. What caused the initial tension between the two colleagues?
2. How might each person have acted differently to prevent the problem?
3. What cultural difference is mentioned?
4. In what ways does the situation between the colleagues reflect the differences between low-context and high-context cultures?



**A.01 3b** What phrases did the speakers use to express the following? Listen again if necessary.

1. to ask (diplomatically) why an agreed deadline hasn't been met

**Emma:** \_\_\_\_\_

2. to take responsibility for the lack of clarity

**Emma:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Luis:** \_\_\_\_\_

3. to express apology

**Luis:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Emma:** \_\_\_\_\_

4. to express mutual understanding as a result of the conversation

**Emma:** \_\_\_\_\_

**4a** Consider the following situation and the responses, which might typically be given in each of the broad cultural regions: North America, the UK, Central Europe and Asia. Match each response to the cultural region you think it is most likely to come from.

**Situation:** A colleague asked for feedback on a recent report. The first part, outlining the problem, was excellent. However, the second section with the suggestions for solutions lacked structure and a recognisable conclusion.

**Responses:**

1. "The first part was good, but the second part completely lacks structure, so there isn't a clear conclusion."
2. "It wasn't too bad. I would consider taking another look at the structure of the second section. But that's just my opinion."
3. "You did a particularly great job outlining the problem in the first section."
4. "As a team, we might benefit from learning the best way to structure a report."

**4b** Discuss in class. What do the responses tell you about how each of these cultures provide feedback? How would you consider adapting your communication style when dealing with people from these different cultures?

**5a** You're going to hear a podcast about the challenges of working across different cultures in which three core principles will be mentioned. What do you expect these to be? Share ideas in class.

**A.02 5b** Listen to the podcast. What three core principles does the intercultural communications expert share in the podcast?

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**5c** In pairs. Come up with two more 'core principles' for improving intercultural communication.

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**5d** Share your principles in class and discuss whether and why you agree or disagree with them.

**6a** In pairs or small groups. Choose a country that you travel to, or that you could potentially travel to, for work. Note down cultural norms and business etiquette that you are aware of and carry out online research to find out more. Focus on:

- Communication styles (direct vs. indirect, verbal vs. non-verbal, etc.)
- Common 'dos and don'ts' in business contexts.
- Accepted styles for offering praise and criticism in your chosen country.

**6b** With the same partner. Prepare a short (maximum two minute) presentation of your findings, indicating how you would adapt your communication style when dealing with clients or colleagues from the other country. Make sure you both have equal amounts of information to present.



"You're from Europe, aren't you?  
I'll bet this is metric."

**6c** Together, present your findings to the class. After your presentation, be prepared to answer questions from your listeners.

## › Review and AOB

Review what you have learned in this session:

1. Explain briefly how communication differs in low-context and high-context cultures.
2. Suggest two phrases you could use to handle a misunderstanding.
3. Suggest two key skills for effective intercultural communication.

## › Final feedback

What did you find most useful in this session? Tell the class. Any questions?